WHIRRAKEE

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.
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Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $40; Family $50; Concession: Single $35; Family $40. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $40.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The meeting starts with members sharing their recent natural history observations. The invited speaker starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 5:30pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Anne Bridley, Kerrie Norris, John Lindner, Jenny Shield, Diana Collier, Devi Shanty

Excursions are conducted regularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. Several interclub field naturalist campouts are held every year.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is actively involved in local conservation issues. An **indigenous garden** has been established around the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building. Working bees are advertised on the *Whirrakee* diary page.

Bird Observing: Club members conduct regular bird surveys. Please contact Anne Bridley 5442 6188 or Glenise Moors 5439 6254 for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5442 6188. To propose bird observing excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club
Vol. 35, No. 5, June 2014
Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*), which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions should be posted or e-mailed to the editor at least two days prior to the last Wednesday of the month. They will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although space restrictions occasionally require shortening of articles or holding them over till the following edition of *Whirrakee*.

Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's Note
Thanks to Richard and Gemma for filling in for me while I was gallivanting around Australia during April and May. It was fun joining the grey nomads for a while (see pages 6 and 7 for evidence), but now it is back to business. By the way, I only put my holiday photos on those pages because I did not get enough pictures from members to fill the four pages. On page 3, various ways are listed on how members can share observations, but with all of those options... don't forget that the Whirrakee *is an important way too. For the May meeting, we had a wonderful speaker (once again), but in spite of writing copious notes to share with non-attending members (as I often do), there has not been any room lately in the* Whirrakee *to publish these notes. Therefore, try and make the effort to go to these meetings as often as possible; Ben Goonan is doing a fantastic job in some-how convincing these busy expert speakers from a long way away, to come to Bendigo for the club meetings and share their knowledge so willingly.*

Front page photographer: Jenny Shield
The big old ironbark in the centre of the photo is one of the big Wellsford trees that were visited on May 18 for a support walk organized by the Wellsford Forest Conservation Alliance. 'The big trees' are highly significant, as they represent the remaining pre-European Ironbarks on public land in Bendigo, see page 4 for more photos of the event.

Short Notices

Observations in focus

Our general monthly meetings begin with sharing observations (which is what field-natting is mainly about), but even if you cannot attend, you can always look at the BFNC project on the Bowerbird site (which is at http://www.bowerbird.org.au/) and add any observations there or submit them through the BFNC website (see inside front cover) or send in a hard-copy record.

New book on mosses

Mosses of the Dry Forests in South-Eastern Australia by Cassia Read and Bernard Slattery has been published recently. It is a guide for students and absolute beginners – technically accurate, but free of technical language The book was a community project of the 'Friends of the Box-Ironbark Forests' and was supported by the Norman Wettenhall Foundation. Recommended retail price is $15.00, but FOBIF members, landcarers, field naturalists and VNPA members can buy it for $10.00 (plus $2 postage & handling).

E-mail Matt Comer or Sabine Wilkens for an order form if interested.

Invitation to join the Trails Working Group Initiative

As members of the BFNC we hold a direct interest in the future management of local forests for low impact recreation activities; you are invited to join an initiative to address the rapidly increasing number of illegal trails built for mountain bike riding.

The long established trail network through local forests has been enjoyed for recreational riding over many years. More recently, the increasing popularity of MTB's and changes in riding styles, has led to new trails being established by riders without consultation from other user groups or regulatory processses. Incremental disturbance poses a significant threat to local environmental values which are also (increasingly) stressed from a range of other impacts.

This initiative proposes the establishment of a Working Group to actively undertake practical measures to address the environmental impacts of these trails. This will be achieved through: 1) Providing a forum for consultation across user groups to recognise their different values, 2) Identify opportunities for mutual outcomes through restoration of unauthorised trails and the development of new formal trails, 3) Engage the broader community to promote low impact recreation which recognises the ecological value of local environments.

Community groups represent a significant volunteer capacity to assist Parks Victoria manage impacts from recreational use. A positive and collaborative approach to managing local parks for improved recreational opportunities, which minimise potential environmental impacts will be unique in this region. The practical emphasis of the group will highlight actions that have direct outcomes for improved management.

To become involved, and/or for further information about upcoming meetings, please contact richard.goonan@optusnet.com.au

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June BFNC – Geology Excursion

Sunday 15 June 2014

Please see back page for excursion details

N.B. *As of the May general meeting, there are now 18 bookings, but there are still a few seats available.*

And...would those people who did book, please pay John Lindner at the June meeting?

Future excursions – make a note in your diary now...

Friday 15 August Waterbird count, Coliban Water sewerage treatment works, Epsom

Sunday 14 September Botany (Spring wildflowers) and birds. Location to be selected

Sunday 12 October. Botany (Spring wildflowers)and birds. Location to be selected.

Weekend 1/2 November with Monday 3 and Tuesday 4 (Melbourne Cup Day). Camp out, Warby-Ovens National Park, Killawarra Forest section.

Full details will appear closer to these dates

In the foreground towards the right is a big ironbark that has died, and further away, slightly to the left of it, is a living old ironbark.

Wellsford Forest Walk: On the 18th of May, over 100 people gathered to walk to the big trees in the Wellsford Forest in a gesture of support for protecting this forest with its amazing trees by adding it to the Greater Bendigo National Park. Many more people, willing to participate, had to be turned away by the organisers (see also front cover). Jenny Shield submitted these inspiring photos

Who is the oldest in the picture below? The tree, by about 300 years. The bark is not deeply fissured, because the girth of the old tree is no longer increasing.

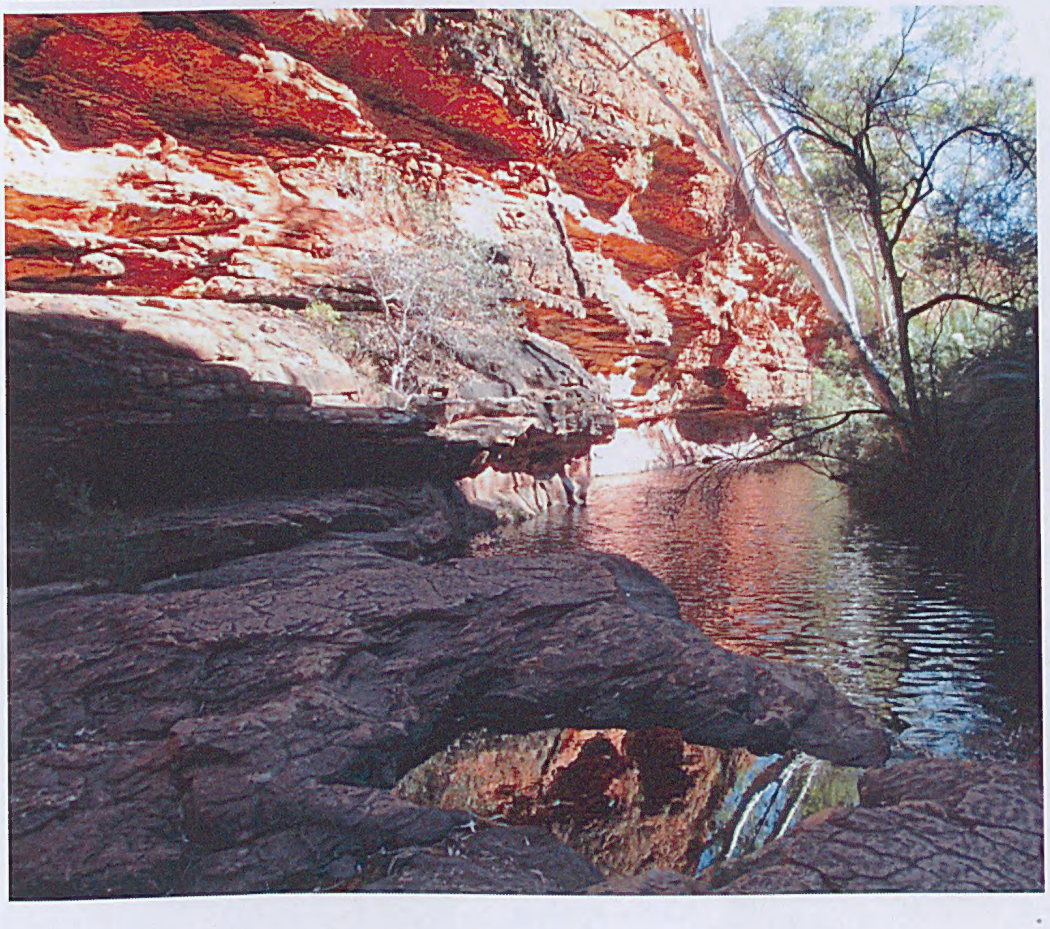
Happy wanderers…

April excursion to the Whipstick and Kamarooka sections of the GBNP (Photographer Glenise Moors)
For a report of the day, see page 8.

All photos were taken around Campbell's or Millwood Dam where frogs (Plains Froglet, Pobble Bonk and Spotted Marsh Frog) were calling loudly and much frog-spawn was sighted. Recent rain has filled many dams and waterholes, providing relief from the heat of summer.

A majestic Blue Mallee, *Eucalyptus polybractea* (below with Helena Slawson)

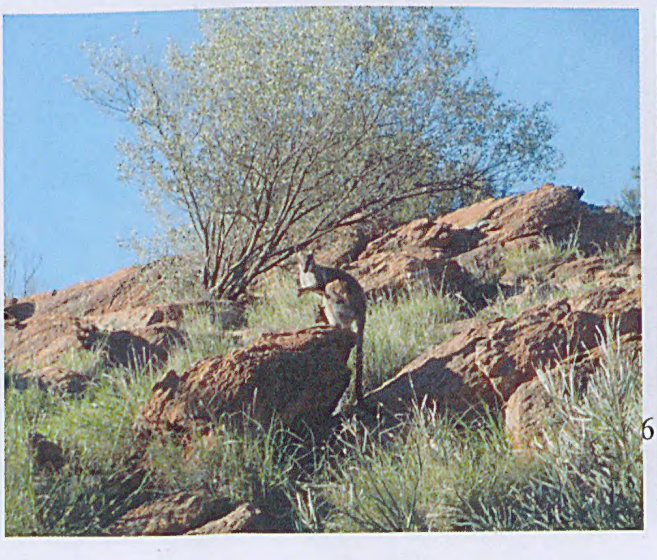
Holidays in Central Australia
(photos by Sabine Wilkens)



Above left: Mallee Ringneck feeding on saltbush in the Flinders Ranges
Above middle: Australian Ringneck (?) feeding on a discarded lemon in Alice Springs,
Above left: Mulga Parrot at King's Canyon

Left: 'The Garden of Eden', which is part of the canyon rim walk at King's Canyon

Below: Rock wallaby at Olive Pink Botanic Gardens in Alice Springs



Emu at Hill's homestead, Wilpena Pound

Above: Round-leaf Parakeela *Calandrinia remota* (at Yulara)

Left: *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, Wilpena Pound camping area. It looks like the famous tree photographed nearby in 1937 by Harold Czesnaux and titled 'The Spirit of Endurance' This tree has seen a lot.

Below: *Xanthorrhea quadrangulata*, Rock Grass Tree (Flinders Ranges)

Right: Sturts Desert Rose, *Gossypium sturtianum* (at Yulara)

Below: Native Apricot, *Pittosporum phylliraeoides* (at Wilpena Pound camping ground)

Report of April excursion to the Whipstick forest

by John Lindner

Date Sunday 13 April 2014

General area North-east section of Greater Bendigo National Park.

Specific area Track from Millwood Dam to Campbell's Dam, about 3 kilometres.

Weather Fine, sunny and warm, after 2 days of rainfall on Wednesday and Thursday of the previous week.

Water Millwood Dam and all other dams were quite high. Frogs were calling at these places. There were several pools along the main gully, and many damp patches. This would have presented a stark contrast to when Anne Bridley visited the area in about mid-March, which was the inspiration for this excursion.

Leaders John Lindner, Anne Bridley

Participants Pam Land, Glenise Moors, Kate Lindner, Aaron Hall, Nita Hall, Aryo Hall, Helena Slawson

Program We decided to start by walking through to Campbell's Dam, where we had lunch and then returned the same way. Back at Millwood Dam, we had afternoon tea, before going to John and Pam Land's place at Neilborough (that could be another whole report on its own).

Bird list Anne Bridley (see later)

Photos Glenise Moors (see page 5)

Introduction

I have walked this track numerous times over the years, including annually long ago with Jan Orr's grade 6 class from Gravel Hill Primary School, and with the Bendigo Bush-walking and Outdoor Club. It is actually part of a Whipstick walking track from Black Rock to Mulga Dam, but many of the small posts with an arrow have been knocked over and left on the ground. It is quite easy to lose your way – I can bear witness to that. Despite my relative long term acquaintance with the area, on this occasion, I found myself noticing things that I supposed I hadn't before – or at least I was seeing some different patterns or associations.

Below are some outstanding general features of the area:

1. The corridor of Yellow Gums

At Millwood Dam, these beautiful trees are large, quite widely spaced, and the drainage line they occupy is large. Proceeding up the watercourse, the tree zone generally gets narrower, and eventually is only one tree wide. This of course is due to the trees being confined to the gully, which concentrates moisture falling "upstream". Yellow Gums obviously need more moisture than the surrounding mallees. But they are much taller than the mallees, projecting well above them. This is very useful for knowing where you are, since you can discern the gully from any slight rise, but eventually the trees run out.

2. Plant zones

As you proceed from west to east, you are actually following a transect, which has some quite noticeable zones distinguished by the plant species in them. In order they are as follows: Yellow Gum dominating the gully line (as above) with some other shrubs such as Violet Honey-myrtle; mallee eucalypts (Blue, Green, Bull) which may have a few understory shrubs or be almost barren of other plants; Broom Bush with a very high diversity of understory plants. In other words, there is constant variation, particularly as you go down into and out of a gully. The other factor is the general rise in the land as you travel east. At Millwood Dam you are at 160 metres above sea level, but at Campbell's Dam you are at about 180 metres, having passed over a higher area at 190 metres about half way. This factor, and quite likely the nature of the rock substrate and the soil it forms, would surely be critical determinants of plant species changes. Near the highest point of the walk, there is even a solitary, quite large Red Ironbark.

3. Ordovician rock outcrops, stones and soil

Typical rock outcrops in the Bendigo area present the sedimentary strata emerging from the ground with a near vertical alignment and oriented roughly north-south. And this is still the pattern in the Whipstick. Of course these strata were once horizontal and under the ocean, but they have been hardened into rock, uplifted, steeply folded and drastically planed

off by weathering and erosion. There is not a lot of exposed rock out here. Weathering reduces this material to clay, and this is very good stuff for plants in a dry environment: it may be hard to get established, but it always has some moisture in it. Stark white quartz gravel and other gravel with a deposit of iron oxide (ranging from black to deep red) are common features of the surface. The quartz would have been injected into the strata as a fluid, and has now eroded out completely. At one point in the main gully leading to Millwood Dam there were large lumps of quartz just sitting in the sand.

4. Animals

The Swamp Wallaby was evidenced by a couple of animals we saw, as well as very clear prints of front paws and hind feet in fresh mud, and the nibbling of orange bracket fungus. Echidna activity was evidenced by several large burrowings in ant nests, where the animal had left the impression of its whole body in the mound.

5. Soil crusting lichens

In places where the ground surface is intact, a mosaic of various colours indicates different species – white, grey, black, dark green, pale green. All are level with the surface and are incorporated into the soil particles. Most of the time, when these wonderfully tough plants are dry, they would barely be doing anything except staying alive, 'coming to life' only when damp. One of these flat lichens has a slightly rougher texture. On the other hand, Coral Lichen (*Cladia sullivanii*), with its many branching, hollow, perforated tubes, is quite three dimensional and sits unattached on the surface. On the other hand, mosses are always slightly raised, soft-textured and green, especially when damp. All of these plants have an important role in holding the soil together against the effects of flowing water. Where there was no lichen, sheet erosion was quite evident. Of course, leaf litter plays a part in this protection too.

6. Deposition zones

At the lower end of gullies down which water had flowed, there were always deposits of various kinds. One was quite clean, coarse, yellow, sand, mainly quartz, as was evident just near Millwood Dam where there was a long, deep plume. Other deposits comprise coarse woody debris and leaves swept along and coming to rest behind trees in the gully. The massive flood flows of 2010 – 2011 left plenty of evidence in the form of high mounds of such debris. Now this material has decomposed to deep deposits of humus, so the gully soil has been considerably enriched. In some other areas, away from the main gully, there were deposits of damp sand and silt, loaded with moisture after the recent rain.

7. Plant adaptations to this harsh, dry, hot area

There are notable features about plants in this area, which are worth discussing. All the features are adaptations to reduce the loss of moisture through the stomata and to minimize heating. Some plants have leaves which are greatly reduced in size compared to plants in other areas around Bendigo, especially southwards: Common Correa, Twiggy Bush-pea and Grey Everlasting all have notably smaller leaves than normal. Some plants have replaced their leaves with spines or needles, e.g. *Daviesia benthamii*, or Ploughshare Wattle. Some plants have leaves which are held vertically (minimize the impact of the overhead sun in summer), folded lengthwise (protect the stomata on the inside surface) and hairy inside the fold (further protection): Sticky Cassinia, Alpine Grevillea and Smooth Parrot-pea share these features.

Plant List

Eucalypts

Blue Mallee *Eucalyptus polybractea*

Many trees were in full flower. There were some large plants at Campbell's Dam, one in particular at the upper end of the dam (perhaps a combination of deep soil, being a lone specimen, water right beside it, see page 5).

Green Mallee *Eucalyptus viridis*

These trees were well budded up in readiness for spring flowering.

Yellow Gum *Eucalyptus leucoxylon*

While most trees were carrying a great load of buds all ready to flower quite soon, some

trees had a few early flowers. There were some very fine specimens with many hollows and burls. There were a few notable dead trees too.

Melaleucas

Cross-leaf Honey-myrtle *Melaleuca decussata*
Violet Honey-myrtle *Melaleuca wilsonii*
Dense clumps in damp gullies and also on very dry hillsides.

Wattles

Golden Wattle *Acacia pycnantha*
Ploughshare Wattle *Acacia gunnii*
Whirrakee Wattle *Acacia williamsonii*
Round-leaf Wattle *Acacia rotundifolia*
(usually grouped with Gold-dust Wattle, but very distinct)
Mallee Wattle *Acacia montana*
Golden Wattle *Acacia pycnantha*

Peas

Bitter Pea(?) *Daviesia benthamii*
Twiggy Bush-pea *Pultenaea largiflorens*
Smooth Parrot –pea *Dillwynia glaberrima*
Gorse Bitter-pea *Daviesia ulicifolia*

Grevillea/Hakea

Alpine Grevillea *Grevillea alpina*
Silky Hakea *Hakea sericea*

Miscellaneous

Small-leaf Waxflower *Eriostemon difformis*
Common Correa *Correa reflexa*
Cranberry Heath *Astroloma humifusum*
Heath Myrtle *Micromyrtus ciliata*
Golden Pennants *Glischrocaryon behrii*
Prickly Guinea-flower *Hibbertia exutiaces*
Slatey Sheoak *Allocasuarina muelleriana*
Dampiera species *Dampiera*
Clasping Goodenia *Goodenia amplexans*
Riceflower/DaphneHeath *Pimelea/Brachyloma*
(unsure as to which genus)

Daisies

Sticky Cassinia *Cassinia uncata*
Grey Everlasting *Ozothamnus obcordatus*
Drooping Cassinia *Cassinia arcuata*
Cypress Daisy-bush *Olearia teretifolia*

Tufting

Many-flowered Mat-rush *Lomandra multiflora*
Black-anther Flax-lily *Dianella revoluta*

Soft-leaved annuals in leaf litter in damp gullies

Trailing Speedwell *Veronica plebeia*
Stinking Pennywort *Hydrocotyle laxiflora*

Bird List compiled by Anne Bridley

White-faced Heron
Common Bronzewing
Galah
Purple-crowned Lorikeet
Eastern Rosella
Fan-tailed Cuckoo
Superb Fairy-wren
Spotted Pardalote
Shy Heathwren
Weebill
Chestnut-rumped Thornbill
Buff-rumped Thornbill
Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Yellow Thornbill
Red Wattlebird
Yellow-faced Honeyeater
White-eared Honeyeater
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater
Yellow-plumed Honeyeater
Fuscous Honeyeater
Black-chinned Honeyeater
Brown-headed Honeyeater
White-naped Honeyeater
Tawny-crowned Honeyeater
Red-capped Robin
White-browed Babbler
Varied Sittella
Crested Bellbird
Golden Whistler
Rufous Whistler
Grey Shrike-thrush
Grey Fantail
Willie Wagtail
Dusky Woodswallow
Grey Butcherbird
Australian Magpie
Australian Raven
White-winged Chough
Mistletoebird
Welcome Swallow
Flame Robin, 1 male and 1 brown bird at the Land's place

Other animals

Plains Froglet
Banjo Frog
Spotted Marsh Frog
Black Wallaby

Diary

All Club meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High St Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

Wednesday June 11 **7.30pm**
Richard Thomson from the Australasian Native Orchid Society will talk about 'Helping our Victorian Threatened Orchids'

BFNC June Geology Excursion
Sunday 15 June 2014 Meet at clubrooms, Golden Square, 8.30 am, should be returning there by 5.00 pm at the latest
Leader Eric Wilkinson
Organiser John Lindner
Bookings As of the May general meeting there are now 18 bookings for the bus we are hiring, but there are still a few seats available. Either telephone John 5448 3406, please leave a message and contact details or e-mail John at jwl.bendigo@gmail.com
Cost $15.00.
Payment Please pay John in cash, preferably at the June meeting or, at a pinch, on the day. A receipt will be issued.
Private cars If we exceed the bus passenger quota, a few cars may follow along. There will of course be no charge for such vehicles. Please note – the bus must be filled first before we have cars.
General area Maldon, Mount Tarrengower, Castlemaine, Mount Alexander
Stops
1. South of Porcupine Overpass
2. Fogarty's Gap
3. Mount Tarrengower - general
4. Mount Tarrengower – granodiorite/hornfels contact zone
5. Near Mount Tarrengower – Ordovician rock cutting
6. Maldon-Cairn Curran Road – granodiorite exposure
7.Cairn Curran Reservoir
8. Castlemaine – anticline on Lyttleton Street
9. Mount Alexander – Dog Rocks
10. Mount Alexander – Layton's Upper Quarry

Notes and map Provided
Driving distance About 150 km total round trip
Sound system There will be microphone in the bus for Eric to comment on the way, and also a field sound system
What to bring warm, waterproof clothing, morning and afternoon tea, water, hot drinks, lunch, good footwear, camera
Toilets Mount Tarrengower, Castlemaine, Mount Alexander
Lunch stop Either Mount Tarrengower or Cairn Curran, as appropriate

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Family Nature Club
The Nature Club activities are continuing, please ring or check out their website for the June event. **Registration:** Bendigonatureclub@gmail.com or 5443-1326
http://bendigofamilynatureclub.blogspot.com/

Bendigo Native Plant Group meeting.
All interested people are welcome to come along. Meeting starts at 7:30pm on the third Tuesday of the month, Golden Square Senior Citizens Hall.
Next meeting: 17th of June.

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.
W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals. It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Sustainability and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.
WRIN meetings held on the 1st Saturday of the month at 1pm the Golden Square Senior Citizens Hall

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Sunday 22nd June - Newstead Community Walk #185 - Meet 9am outside Newstead Community Centre in Lyons Street (Pyrenees Hwy), Newstead to carpool to start of walk. Free and all are welcome except dogs. Walkers usually bring morning tea to share in the bush after the walk. Hot drinks provided. We return to Newstead at about 11am. Walks coordinator is Frances Cincotta ph. 5476 2691.